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Wendell Willis (ed.)

Eucharist and Ecclesiology: Essays in Honor of Dr. Everett Ferguson (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), 206 pp. ISBN 978-1-4982-8292-5 (pbk). \$20.00.

This edited volume brings together papers presented at a colloquy in honour of Everett Ferguson, the scholar of early Christianity. Contributors are from Abilene Christian University which is affiliated with the Churches of Christ, from other Texas universities and from further afield.

Three plenary papers provide different denominational yet self-critical perspectives. Gary Badcock, who is Anglican, maps the large and contradictory shift in early Protestant ecclesiology from national churches to multiple free religious associations. Suggesting that this has now become little more than the misapplication of the secularizing principle of absolute freedom of choice, he contends that an opposing centripetal dynamic, from the many back to the one, needs to be recovered. A Cistercian, Denis Farkasfalvy, celebrates the return to historical sources characteristic of Roman Catholic theology in the later twentieth century, viewing this in continuity with earlier re-sourcing movements such as the Reformations of the sixteenth century and movements of monastic reform. The Russian Orthodox scholar Paul Meyendorff considers the relative lateness of ecclesiology on the theological scene—it is, for instance, marginal in the Creeds—and develops his case by considering the diptychs, which in Orthodox liturgy are two lists of people, living and departed, who are prayed for by name.

As is so often the case at academic conferences, many of the most engaging papers are from parallel sessions. Curt Niccum accepts the challenging but important task of locating eucharistic theology in John's Gospel. This might seem difficult: it is typically claimed that the beloved disciple prefers his account of Jesus washing feet, and the only person reported to have received communion is the betrayer Judas Iscariot. The most obvious eucharistic source is the well-worked flesh and blood motif of chapter 6, but Niccum chooses instead to identify the prominence of eucharistic imagery in the seven signs and the seven 'I am' statements, which are distributed through the whole Gospel. Each

series begins and ends with references to the Eucharist: Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana, and his death, burial and resurrection; and Jesus as the bread of life and the true vine. Supporting this case is John's detailed interest in the Passover, displayed especially in his presentation of Jesus as the lamb of God and all its associated imagery.

Two other contributors relate the Eucharist to its Jewish and pagan antecedents. Focusing on Paul and the *Didache*, Jeffrey Peterson argues that rather than representing two distinct traditions, these two sources reflect a common meal tradition. Drawing on textual evidence from across the Pauline corpus, he shows that Paul had extensive indirect knowledge of many details of the life of Jesus, and that he viewed the community gathering as a memorial specifically of this, rather than as merely a version of a secular banquet or Passover seder. Similarly with the *Didache*, a reading of the whole document reveals a christology that controverts the notion that, just because—unlike in 1 Corinthians 11—no words of institution are narrated, the meal was not rooted in Christian catechesis, even if the substance of this was often not formally rehearsed. In any case, there are insufficient grounds to posit separate traditions. In contrast, Dennis Smith traces the Eucharist to house church worship. Exploding the commonly held but false opinion that domesticity implies informality, he demonstrates that the life of the Roman house was shaped by ritual and protocol, especially with regard to dining. The dining room was open to view from outside and was the place where guests, including strangers, were hosted. At formal banquets, the issuing of invitations and the patronage of the host were both important, and in 1 Corinthians 14 the encouragement that all participants bring some spoken contribution reflects the inclusive character of the later part of the meal. However, arrangements could be varied as circumstances dictated. For instance, the upper room of Mark's and Luke's accounts of the Last Supper suggests a community of a lower social class, with guests probably reclining on cushions rather than couches.

Wendell Willis, the volume's editor, offers an informative analysis of the multivalent term 'koinonia'. This is typically interpreted ecclesiologically, being associated with Christian meal fellowship in a community context. Yet it includes a more doctrinal and potentially mystical notion of

‘shared participation in life with the Spirit and with Christ’ (p. 175). This entails that churches cannot be understood solely as voluntary associations of believers. Indeed, when participation in Christ is viewed as participation in Christ’s body, three related and shifting referents come into view: Christ’s historical body, and Christ’s spiritual bodies, which are the Church and the Eucharist. In 1 Corinthians 10 this theology places on Christians, notwithstanding their freedom, the requirement not to participate in other, demonic bodies.

As will by now be clear, many of the parallel papers have a strong New Testament focus. While theologically fundamental, this provides only a partial view of the relationship between the Eucharist and ecclesiology. In Orthodox theology, for instance, the early Councils and Patristic writings are equally important, while in Roman Catholic theology the principle that doctrine develops means that Scripture is understood in part via the history of its interpretation. Furthermore, a full assessment of the Eucharist and ecclesiology would require more direct study of the liturgy, alongside the biblical texts that describe it. For instance, an awareness of the many shifts in beliefs about who may or may not receive the communion elements, and when, and whether in one or both kinds, adds to theological understanding of the place of Christians in the Church. Eucharistic prayers contain rich and varied theologies of how Christ relates to the Church and is present in it. The study of histories and sources such as these may call into question received assumptions that have sustained denominational boundaries, opening the way to a new, liturgically-rooted ecclesiology that is ecumenically suggestive.

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